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President:—The Right Reverend M. CREIGHTON, D.D.,
Lord Bishop of Peterborough.

2. *The Doctrine of Intention, with special reference to the validity of Ordinations in the English Church.*

THE Head of the Roman Communion in England, in the attack which he made some time ago upon the English Church, laid great, and even the chief, stress upon the absence of an adequate *intention* on the part of her bishops, in many cases, and even generally for a considerable period, since the Reformation, to confer in ordaining the powers, functions, and prerogatives which the Church Catholic understands to belong to the several grades of Holy Orders respectively.^a The same alleged defect in the English Church has also from time to time been urged against her by other modern Roman controversialists occupying less prominent stations.

The bearing of this question of intention upon the validity of ordinations in the English Church will be dealt with before the conclusion of this tract; but it is necessary to clear the way by some more general consideration of the principles involved.

1. *Roman teaching on the intention of the Minister of a Sacrament as a requisite for its valid performance.*

While it is *de fide* in the Roman Church that a certain right intention of the minister is required for the valid performance of a Sacrament, the authoritative formula describing the nature of that intention is vague and obscure, and the interpretations which have been and are given of it by different schools of theologians in that communion are diverse and contradictory. And yet this is not a matter which may suitably be left to those who have the leisure and the qualifications to be students and thinkers. If we have really here to do with one of the requisites for the valid performance of every Sacrament, it is a question of deep and practical moment in the every-day life

^a See Cardinal Vaughan's letter which was published in the *Times* of Oct. 5, 1894.

of all Christians, and we might surely expect to know precisely what the requisite is. To those who are impressed with the signs of vagueness of thought, or compromise, in the language of the formularies of the English Church, and who fancy that in the teaching of the Church of Rome all is clear and decided, and who are inclined to take this supposed decision of tone as a sufficient note of truth, the whole history and present position of the doctrine of intention may well be commended for study.

A few points only can here be touched upon. And, first (*a*) as to *the history of the formal definition of the doctrine*. The formula in which, as we shall see, this doctrine is defined, is adopted from the scholastic theology. Martin V., in his bull on the errors of Wiclif and Huss (A.D. 1418) implies the truth of the doctrine,^b but the first direct statement of it by authority was contained in the decree (A.D. 1439) of Pope Eugenius IV., following upon the Council of Florence, in which he expounded the Catholic faith for the benefit of Armenian Christians. He there asserts three things to be necessary in a Sacrament, proper 'matter,' the right words as 'form,' and *thirdly*, "the person of a minister who confers the Sacrament, "with the intention of doing what the Church does." (Labbe, vol. 13, p. 535). When at the Council of Trent, in January 1547, after the Council had been sitting for about thirteen months, the subject of the Sacraments was taken into consideration, a series of propositions were formulated which were alleged to be held by heretics. One of these was "That the intention of the minister is "not necessary, and has no effect in the Sacraments." This thesis seems to have been chiefly framed with a view to the language of Luther. He was accused of having said that it mattered not even if the minister acted in jest; and undoubtedly Luther was justly open to censure for having appeared to teach that not merely the saving use of the Sacraments, but their own proper force, depended wholly

^b One of the inquiries which he ordered to be made in the case of persons suspected of sympathy with their opinions was the following:—

Item, utrum credat, quod malus sacerdos cum debita materia et forma, et cum intentione faciendi quod facit ecclesia, vere conficiat, vere absolvat, vere baptizet, et vere conferat alia sacramenta.

upon the faith of the receivers.^c In the discussions on this subject at the Council of Trent, the most prominent part was taken by a Dominican Friar known as Ambrosius Catharinus (his original name was Lancellotto Politi), who afterwards became successively Bishop of Minori and Archbishop of Conza. Catharinus, while he clearly distinguished his own views from Luther's, earnestly maintained that it was only necessary that the minister should to all appearance by his manner intend to perform the Sacrament, and that if so, no secret thought of his to the contrary could have any effect to destroy the force of his act. The majority, however, were not of his opinion, and they probably, also, felt themselves bound by the words of Eugenius IV. In the Decree on the Sacraments, passed at the seventh formal Session of the Council, on March 3, 1547, Canon XI., they fell back on those words, with the significant addition of *saltem*, 'at least,' which remains as a kind of echo of the preceding controversies:—"if anyone shall say, that in ministers, "when they perform and confer sacraments, there is not required "the intention at least of doing what the Church does, let him "be anathema."

(b) *Interpretation of the formula.*

Now it is hard to grasp the meaning of these words; indeed they are exceedingly ambiguous. In the first place, do they mean that the minister on every occasion of performing a sacramental rite must have consciously determined and willed that that particular sacrament should be performed, so that if his thoughts were distracted before and at the time, and he went through the act mechanically, the rite had no sacramental value, though nothing was wanting to the outward form, and though onlookers would have supposed that the minister's thoughts were engaged in the fulfilment of his function? That would be the most natural sense of the formula, literally taken. But if such were the intention required, there is reason to fear that the percentage of cases would be appreciable in which, when it seemed that there had been a

^c The words principally referred to seem to have been some occurring in the chapter on 'the Captivity of Baptism' in Luther's little treatise, 'Of the 'Babylonish Captivity of the Church.' They are as follows: "For the virtue of "baptism is placed rather in the faith and use of him who receives than of him

Sacrament, there had been none in reality; and all confidence would be destroyed in the minds of the faithful, that they were receiving in the Sacraments what they had been bidden to seek there. For even good men may at times fail to keep up their attention, through fatigue or other human infirmities, when engaged upon the most solemn work. Accordingly, it is customary to explain that a 'virtual,' or, as some would say, an 'implicit,' intention suffices; as, for instance, if the minister went to church with the intention of performing suchlike functions, though during the service he failed to think about what he was doing.

Again, to pass to the important words which state what the minister of the Sacrament is to intend, viz., "to do what the Church "does":—they may clearly mean either (*a*) that he has a conception of the Church before his mind, and that his purpose is to take her for his preceptress and his example; or (*β*) that, what he has a mind to do is in point of fact the same as that which the Church does, even though he may not be fixing his mind at all upon the Church, and may not possess any satisfactory idea or any idea whatever of the Church. Further, this doing what the Church does may be looked at on its external or its spiritual side, and the intention demanded would accordingly be either simply to carry out the Church's practice, or to effect those spiritual consequences which, according to Christ's promise to His Church, attend upon the due performance of the appointed rites.

Now in regard to all these ambiguities, it has been the tendency of Roman theologians of various schools to give the utmost latitude of signification which they think possible to the Tridentine formula. Though the majority hold that some kind of interior intention on the part of the minister is requisite, any one of the kinds of intention which have been above indicated, even that which is least instructed and most limited, will serve the purpose. Nay, it is laid down that 'intention' must be distinguished from 'faith,' and that while the "who confers it. Even as one reads of an instance of a certain buffoon, who was "baptised in jest. These and such like crabbed disputations and questions have "been created for us by those who have attributed nothing to faith, and everything "to works and rites: Whereas we owe everything to faith alone, and nothing to "rites, which faith gives us freedom of spirit from all those scruples and opinions.'

former is necessary the latter is not.^d Let me quote the words of a modern writer, Cardinal Gousset:—"He who has the misfortune "not to believe in the effects or in the divine institution of the "Sacraments, and who, consequently, has neither the will nor the "thought to produce grace or to confer a Sacrament, will confer "it notwithstanding, provided he had the intention to do that "which in the Church is regarded as a Sacrament."^e Or again, to take the clear statement of a recent Jesuit writer, "that "intention is by no means required, according to which the minister "wills to perform a rite which he himself regards as sacred and "efficacious of grace, provided he wills to go through that rite, which "he knows is regarded as sacred by others, in such a way that it "may be regarded as sacred by others."^f

To those who have not considered the difficulties of the Roman position in this matter, it will seem strange that an intention such as that just described should be made so much of. But her theologians have to face the fact that in the Roman Church herself, there have been godless and unbelieving bishops and priests, and in times of corruption (it is to be feared) not a few such. Moreover, the Council of Trent in the very next Canon to that which we are considering, condemned (as the 26th of our 39 Articles does) the notion which was held by some of the more extreme reformers, that the minister's ungodliness of itself vitiated the Sacrament. But a thoroughly ungodly man can have no true faith, and he is likely to be, especially if he is a bishop, or priest, a positive unbeliever. Moreover, there is a famous decision of the Early Church,^g which must not be contradicted, that baptism, even by heretics, if rightly performed, is valid. Hence plainly a right faith, or a faith in the Church, on the part of the minister cannot be declared universally necessary

^d See Vasquez, *Disputationes in tertiam partem S. Thomæ*, vol. I, Disp. 138, cap. 2.

^e *Theol. Mor.* II, p. 16.

^f Lehmkühl, *Theol. Mor.* II, p. 20.

^g Canon 8 of Council of Arles, A.D. 314. Scarcely any exceptions were made to this principle in the West; it was received with somewhat more reserve in the East. See *Dict. of Christian Antiquities* (Smith and Wace), vol. I, p. 173.

It is even allowed that Catharinus's doctrine was not expressly condemned by the Council of Trent and that it is permissible to hold it. He himself wrote a book after the decree of the Council had been passed, in which he reaffirmed it, maintaining that it had not been condemned. And the Jesuit, Cardinal Pallavicino, whose history of the Council is to this day the authorised Roman account of the proceedings, while expressing his own opinion that Catharinus's doctrine is false, admits, or rather contends, that it had not been condemned. And it has from time to time found able defenders within the Roman communion.^b It is hard certainly to reconcile this doctrine with the terms of the Tridentine formula, but it falls in with a view which is more honouring to the Sacrament, and which, we may well think, is more likely to commend itself to reverent reason and faith. For that surely is the worthier view which leads us most to sink the personality of the minister in the Church. If he does not by the manner in which he performs his office negative the idea that he is doing what it is his function to do, we are justified in regarding him simply as a mere instrument chosen for an appointed end. So far as any human mind and human agency come into play, they are not those of the minister, but those of the whole living Church whereby the rite has been preserved, and through which the minister, receiver, or receivers, and worshippers have been brought together for its celebration. This is the view put before us by St. Thomas Aquinas. In reply to the difficulty that the intention of the minister cannot be known, he says, that "he acts in the person of the whole Church of which he is a minister; in the words which he utters, the intention of the Church is expressed, which suffices for the perfection of the Sacrament, unless the contrary is openly expressed by the minister or the receiver of the Sacrament."ⁱ And this is the view also of our own Richard Hooker.^j For a con-

^b In part, the controversy on this question seems to have been mixed up with the rivalry between Dominicans and Jesuits, the former defending the view of the member of their own Order, which also accorded, as we shall in a moment see, with the teaching of their own greatest doctor.

ⁱ *Summa*. Pars. III, Quæst. 64, Art. 8.

^j *Eccles. Pol.* v. 58, 3. "Inasmuch as sacraments are actions religious and

ception such as this there seems to be real justification. But we shall look in vain for any adequate answer,^k if we ask what justification there is for the doctrine of Intention now commonly held in the Church of Rome—what grounds, whether in specific declarations of Holy Scripture or in the general principles of Christian Theology, can be adduced for the strange opinion that God has made the validity of the Sacraments, and the blessings which the faithful receive thereby, to depend upon an intention of a kind which even an unbeliever can have, and which nevertheless man can withhold.

We are primarily concerned, however, now not with the truth, baselessness, or falsity, of the Roman doctrine itself, but with its

“mystical, which nature they have not unless they proceed from a serious meaning; and what every man’s private mind is, as we cannot know, so neither are we bound to examine; therefore always in these cases the known intent of the Church generally doth suffice, and where the contrary is not manifest, we may presume that he which outwardly doth work, hath inwardly the purpose of the Church of God.”

^k The learned Jesuit J. B. Franzelin (*De Sacramentis in Genere*, pp. 197 ff.) endeavours to prove that the Roman doctrine of intention is implicitly contained in the true idea of the Sacraments which was revealed by Christ and His Apostles. He seeks to deduce it from the consideration that the Sacraments are given, not merely to be a spectacle and means of visibly teaching truth, but as effectual divine instruments. If they were the former alone, the outward act would suffice, but as they are also, and still more, the latter, the actions involved must be performed *ministerially*, that is, by one to whom (a) Christ has committed authority to act in His stead, and who (b) in performing the act does in very truth use the authority committed to him, which depends on his own intention and volition.

But there is an ambiguity here as to the conditions under which that authority is committed to the minister, of which Franzelin avails himself,—no doubt deceiving himself as much as he may the unwary reader—to slip in his own conception of this power. He includes in it not only the option of the minister to exercise, or refrain from exercising, his office visibly as towards men, not only the possibility that he may even while performing acts that may be regarded as sacramental, give indications by signs or by added words that they are not so to be taken, and thus destroy their validity, but a control inwardly, and apart from all outward manifestation of what he is doing, over the streams of Divine Grace. It is assumed that God has parted with his own rights, *absolutely*, over some of His choicest treasures, consigning them to the keeping of His ministers individually. Hence the inference follows—and no wonder, since it is but the

bearing upon the validity of Orders in the English Church. We will pass on, therefore, to notice the supposed defect which is specially alleged in this case.

2. *The effect upon the validity of rites of the known, or probable, defective or erroneous opinions of the ministers of Sacramental rites, concerning those rites which they perform.*

We are assuming that each Sacrament, or Ordinance of a sacramental nature, is administered 'rightly' (*rite*), i.e. with due observance both as to matter and form of that which has been held necessary in the Church Universal, and that the minister is one who has in the right way (externally at least) received the authority required for administering the kind of rite in question. It is said that in spite of this the rites administered may be invalid owing to want of intention on the part of the minister, because his writings, his verbal declarations, or the opinions common to the party or the religious communion to which he belongs, shew that he takes a low view of the efficacy of the Sacraments; and it is urged that on this account the efficacy of the ministerial acts performed in the English Church must be regarded as at best doubtful. In regard to this argument it should first be observed that, if the definition of requisite intention admits of being stretched in the manner in which we have seen it to be in the interpretations of Roman theologians, such a case as that now before us cannot fairly be excluded. Indeed the intention of such ministers as we are now considering, men who

premiss in other words—that a lawfully ordained minister may to all appearance perform the sacrament, and that yet from want of intention on his part, which might arise from the wish to deceive and injure, there may have been no sacrament. Such a conclusion is so revolting that it ought always to have been felt that there must be some fallacy in any argument conducting to it. And indeed the fallacy in the present instance is not difficult to point out. The essential conception of *ministerial* agency in no way involves the power here supposed.

Words would fail to describe the seriousness of the responsibility which devolves upon the ministers of Christ from the mere fact that they may discharge or decide not to discharge their functions; but at least the Church at large has here the protection that the general body of the Ministry and of the faithful may make provision to supply what is wanting in consequence of the neglect, or caprice, or wrong judgment of individual men.

celebrate the sacraments and ordinances of the Church often with deep religious feeling, though with limited views of their nature, compares very favourably with the intention which, from the Roman point of view, is possible for the unbelieving minister. Their act of obedience in rightly performing the ordinance, implies an element of faith and a desire that whatever blessing Christ designs to confer through it may be conferred. And it is a fundamental principle of the Gospel that God does not dole out His gifts in proportion only to our capacity for understanding their nature.

The decision, also, which has been accepted by the whole Western Church, of an ancient controversy to which allusion has already been made, has a distinct bearing upon the present question. After full discussion it was laid down that those who have been baptised with water and with the right form of words by schismatics or heretics must not be rebaptised, because the baptism which they have received is valid.¹ And the Church, and successive bishops, of Rome, in the 3rd and in the beginning of the 4th century, shewed special eagerness, and had great influence, in procuring this conclusion. Thus it cannot be denied, that according to the faith of the Church, a baptism duly performed is perfectly valid, though he who has administered it does not, as the Church does, believe in Baptismal Regeneration. There is no ground for supposing that the same principle does not hold in regard to other Divine Ordinances : viz., that they are not vitiated by the erroneous opinions of those who in other respects rightly administer them.

The intention, however, with which Holy Orders are and have been conferred in the Church of England may best be learned from her declared mind. To the first English Ordinal, issued in 1549, a Preface was prefixed which has been preserved at every revision of the Prayer-book, though a few unimportant changes in its language were made in 1662. It is here stated that "It is evident unto all
" men diligently reading the holy Scriptures and ancient authors,
" that from the Apostles' time there have been these Orders of
" Ministers in Christ's Church ; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.....
" And therefore to the intent that these Orders should be continued

¹ See p. 5 and note g.

“ and reverently used and esteemed, in this Church of England, it is
 “ requisite that no man (not being at this present Bishop, Priest, nor
 “ Deacon) shall execute any of them, except he be called, tried,
 “ examined, and admitted according to the Form hereafter follow-
 “ ing.”^m Provision was made—this is plainly the intention—for filling
 gaps which should occur through death or otherwise in the ranks of
 the body of the clergy of England at that time existing, and of con-
 tinuing the succession, by means of men who would be Bishops,
 Priests and Deacons in the same sense and as fully as those who
 had been admitted to Holy Orders with the Mediæval ritual, as all
 of them up to that date had been, while the majority, probably, had
 been ordained even before the breach with Rome. It would be
 difficult to express more clearly, or strongly, an intention “to do
 “ what the Church does.” An examination of the Ordinal, as a
 whole, would also shew that this intention is present throughout it.

The design which was thus both in word and in deed made manifest
 to continue a Ministry having the same degrees and prerogatives and
 lawful commission, as that which had existed from the beginning,
 cannot justly be held to be obscured by a certain reticence on the
 part of the English Church. This reticence, in regard to some of
 the functions of the Ministry, many will think to have been very
 wise. For they are functions hard to define at all times, and which
 were especially hard to define satisfactorily in an age of so much
 intellectual and moral confusion throughout the whole of Western
 Christendom, as was that of the Reformation. Further the real heart
 and essence of the intention of individual bishops of the English
 Church in conferring Holy Orders are indicated by their use of the

^m In 1662 the latter part of the second of these sentences was thrown into the
 form, “no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or
 “ Deacon in the Church of England, or suffered to execute any of the said
 “ Functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereunto,
 “ according to the Form hereafter following, or hath had formerly Episcopal
 “ Consecration, or Ordination.” These slight changes of expression were probably
 made chiefly for the sake of improving the construction of the sentence, though
 they may have been introduced in part also with a view to a new state of things.
 Of the general meaning of the words there can be no doubt, since the main
 object of the revisers of 1662 in all their work was to lay stress upon Catholic
 principles.

rites of a Church which plainly claims to be a portion, and to be faithful to the principles, of the Universal Church that has been from the beginning. Before giving any weight to opinions held by, or attributed to, individual men as a mark of intention, it would be necessary for us to ascertain fully the sense which the language employed by them in expressing those opinions had for their own minds. They may have spoken or written inaccurately, incautiously, and in a way which misrepresented their real meaning. They may in that to which they expressed antagonism have had in view some real error or abuse, rather than any portion of Catholic truth. But it seems obvious that an investigation cannot possibly be required of us, which would in many instances be impossible of performance.

All these considerations supply abundant grounds for confidence that right intention, to whatever extent and in whatever sense it is really necessary on sound principles of thought in accordance with the teaching of Christ, has been present in the ministerial acts whereby Holy Orders have been conferred in the English Church.

NOTE.—The Rev. Canon Moyes, answering a question on the Roman doctrine of Intention, after a lecture delivered by the Rev. Luke Rivington at the Kensington Town Hall, on Oct. 31, 1895, said, according to the shorthand report supplied to the Church Historical Society: “The Church teaches, that if there be “such a case in the Catholic Church in which a priest in administering baptism “were to withdraw his secret intention: in that case, God Himself would supply “what was wanting, and God Himself, by His Almighty power, would convey “the sacrament, apart from the secret intention of the minister.” The present writer is wholly unaware what justification there can be for asserting that “the “Church teaches” this. He has met with nothing of the kind in any accredited Treatise or Manual of Roman Theology; nor does he expect ever to do so. For it must be evident on the slightest reflection that this explanation renders the doctrine on the subject which has in modern times become prevalent in the Church of Rome, and all the definitions, subtleties, and controversies connected with it, futile and absurd. It may be pointed out, though it should hardly be necessary to do so, that what is here alleged as to God Himself conveying the grace of the Sacrament in the absence of intention on the part of the priest, is something quite different from the belief that, in the case of those who through ignorance remain outside the Church and have no valid sacraments, God may in His mercy bestow (though not all that they would have had within the Church) grace at least sufficient for their salvation, if they sincerely seek it.

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